

of what they wanted to happen The changes
 they desired
 were to come about by democratic action
 through politics
 through the creation of a new political party
 They were
 out for what Webb was later to call "a new
 orientation
 in British Politics "

"From 1887 at any rate, we looked to the
 formation of a strong
 and independent Labour Party, which should
 take over the
 banner of social and economic reform from the
 Liberal Party,
 which, as it seemed to us, had faltered at the task,
 and could no
 longer satisfy the aspirations of those who stood
 for change "

They looked to it, but facts compelled them
 to see it in
 the distance Sidney Webb goes on

We preached continuously the doctrine of
 Socialism as a matter
 of abstract economic and political theory But we
 also set our-
 selves—and this was the specific feature of the
 Society's work,
 in which it stood alone—to detach the conception
 of Socialism
 from such extraneous ideas as suddenness and
 simultaneity
 of change, violence and compulsion, and atheism
 or anti-
 clencalism What helped to do this was our no less
 practical
 translation of Socialism into separate projects of
 social and
 industrial reform, adapted to the circumstances of
 Great Britain,
 which could be carried into effect by separate
 Acts of Parlia-
 ment And, as a Society, we welcomed the adhesion
 of men and
 women of every religious denomination or of none,
 strongly
 insisting that Socialism was not Secularism, and
 the very object
 and purpose of all sensible collective action was the
 development
 of the individual soul or conscience or character It
 is no small
 gain that the British Labour Party is the only
 Labour or
 Socialist Party in Europe that is not Secularist and
 anti-religious
 Nor did we confine our propaganda to the slowly
 emerging
 Labour Party, or to those who were prepared to
 call themselves
 Socialists, or to the manual workers or to any
 particular class

We put our proposals, one by one, as persuasively as possible, before all who would listen to them—Conservatives whenever we could gain access to them, the churches and chapels of all denominations, the various Universities, and Liberals and Radicals, together with the other Socialist Societies at all times. This we called 'permeation*' and it was an important discovery. Most reformers think that all they have got to do in a political Democracy is to obtain a majority. This is a profound mistake.